

Believers Baptism

Introduction: These notes are designed to clarify what baptism is all about and why we practice believer's baptism. We feel the best way to do this is to go to the Bible itself and discover what it has to say about baptism. We'll do that in answer to several common questions about baptism.

Why do we baptize?

1. Jesus' instructions direct us to baptize believers.

Matt 28:18 - Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (NIV)

"...from the beginning baptism was associated with the making of disciples... Baptism may thus be properly seen as the first concrete step which a disciple takes in obedience to Christ." (Hodges, Gospel Under Siege p 41)

2. Believers Baptism was the practice of the early church. When we baptize believers we follow their example.

Acts 2:41 - Those who accepted his message were baptized...

Acts 8:12 - But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Simon himself believed and was baptized...

Acts 8:26-38 – Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. He believed and then was baptized.

Acts 9:18 – Saul (Paul) believed and was baptized

Acts 10:47-48 – When it was first realized that non-Jews could believe: "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 16 – First believers of the Philippian church:

- *One of those listening was a woman named **Lydia**, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." (16:14-15)*
- ***The jailer** asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved -- you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. The jailer...was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God-- he and his whole family. (16:31-34)*

Acts 18:8 - Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

Is Baptism Necessary for Salvation?

No -- Consider:

- John, a book written to tell people how to receive eternal life, (see 20:31) indicates that belief in Christ is all that is required for eternal life. Nowhere in John is Baptism mentioned as a requirement to receive eternal life.
- Passages in Acts point to belief, not baptism as necessary for eternal life (10:43, 47; 13:38-39, 48;; 15:11; 16:30-31; 20:21).
- If baptism is required for salvation, the Thief on the Cross wouldn't have been saved (Lk 23:42-43).
- Scriptural order is always believe and then be baptized. (Matt 3:2-6; 28:19; Acts 2:37-38; 16:14-15, 34)
- Baptism is the initiatory rite into a believing community, the church. It should only be done to believers.

What is Baptism?

1. Definition - Baptism is an act of association or identification with someone, some group, some message or some event. In the first century, it was a fuller's term--the dry cleaner of ancient days. When he took a white garment and dipped it into scarlet dye, he was said to have "baptized" the garment. The white garment's identity was changed to scarlet. For Christians: "Baptism is the sign of the working of the Gospel in which Christ unites the believer to Himself through Christ and the believer testifies to the subjective reality of that union in his life." (Saucy, p 194)
2. Examples of different types of baptisms and different kinds of identification:
 - a. Jewish proselyte baptism - Identification is with Judaism
 - b. John the Baptist's baptism - Identification is with John's message of righteousness
3. What is the Baptism with the Holy Spirit? This "Spirit" baptism spoken of in 1 Cor. 12:13 happens at the point of conversion when the Holy Spirit baptizes a believer into the body of Christ. The identification is with Christ's body. Note: this baptism is not a second act of grace which believers must seek after conversion.
4. Essence: Believer's Baptism is the Biblical way to make public that we belong to Jesus Christ." It is an outward symbol of an inward reality -- the public transition/ identification from union with the world to union as part of the community of believers. It enables people to publicly identify with the person of Christ, the purposes of Christ, and the people of Christ
5. An Illustration: The Bible teaches that baptism is a public announcement that a person has committed his/her life to Jesus Christ. It may help to see it similar to a graduation ceremony (HS or College). The ceremony is simply the time we publicly declare what happened behind the scenes -- we successfully completed four years of education and met the graduation requirements. No one would think someone could become a graduate simply by going through the ceremony. The ceremony is the way we publicly declare what already happened, we completed the graduation requirements.

What does Believer's Baptism picture?

1. Believers Baptism pictures the reality of my new life in Christ -- in baptism the believer's death to the old life and his resurrection as a new creature in Christ is symbolically acted out.

Rom 6:1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? 2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? 3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to

sin—7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Col 2:12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

2 Cor 5:14-17 -For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

2. Being put down into the water pictures being “Buried with Christ.” The water is a picture of Christ’s death
3. Being lifted out of the water pictures being: “Raised to walk in newness of life” by Christ’s resurrection power. The act is saying: “I identify with a new kind of life I could never live on my own, but by His power, I will be able to live.

Who should be baptized?

Only Believers (see Acts 8:12) - Water Baptism is a picture of the salvation a person has already received. Those getting baptized have trusted Christ as Savior and want everyone to know that it is their desire to follow Christ and live for Him. By their believer’s baptism they are declaring this publicly so all will know

“...the early church never conceived of a believer remaining unbaptized” (Ryrie, Basic Theology p 422)

What about Baptizing Infants? Since they could not yet be believers, infant baptism is not what the NT is describing when it uses the word baptism. Many churches encourage parents to “dedicate” their babies and themselves to the task of raising the children to love and honor God but this is not New Testament believer’s baptism.

What about rebaptism? If someone has been baptized as a believer, as was the practice in the NT, there would be no reason to be rebaptized. If someone was “baptized” as an infant or at any other time before their conversion, they should receive believer’s baptism for the first time -- so technically not rebaptism.

What mode of baptism do we use?

Immersion – Consider:

1. The word baptism literally means “to dip”
2. The example of Jesus and the early church is immersion:

Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. 16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw

the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Acts 8:38-39. ...both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water...

3. The testimony of reformation leaders and denomination founders affirm this:
 - Martin Luther: "I would have those who are to be baptized to be entirely immersed, as the word imports and mystery signifies."
 - John Calvin: "The word 'baptize' signifies to immerse. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church."
 - John Wesley: "Buried with Him, alluding to baptizing by immersion according to the custom of the first church."

How do we actually do baptisms?

1. We introduce each person and ask him or her to give a brief testimony of his or her relationship with Christ. They share how God brought them to Himself, and how His work alone on the cross made their eternal life (salvation) possible. They may also declare their life's new direction and that their desire is to live for Christ. I encourage people to use the "Before – How – After" outline as Paul did when he testified. (see *Preparing Your Personal Testimony* handout for help on how to do this)
2. After their testimonies those being baptized together answer these questions:

- a. Do you believe that Jesus is God's son; the eternal second person of the Trinity?
- b. Do you believe that He died for your sins and God raised Him from the dead?
- c. Do you believe that He is your only hope of eternal life?
- d. Do you know that you have invited Him to be your Savior?
- e. Do you renounce the Devil and all his works?

3. The Baptism: Each person being baptized will carefully step down into the baptismal tank. Hand the baptizer your handkerchief (if used) and then grasp the baptizer arm with one palm up and one down. The baptizer will say: "On the basis of your profession of faith in Jesus Christ I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." You will then be completely immersed under the water and immediately brought back up. Bend your knees and rotate back as he guides you into the water.
4. What to Bring: Bring or wear clothing to be baptized in that will not embarrass you or anyone else when it is wet. Bring a towel, a change of clothes, and a bag to take your wet towel and clothing back home in. Bring a handkerchief with you if you would like your nose covered when you go under the water.
5. After you are baptized you will return to your changing room, put on dry clothes and re-join your family and friends in the Worship Center.

Questions?